

Senator NELSON. The Medical Letter of January 23, 1970, says:

No evidence has appeared since this review that establishes the superiority of 65 milligram doses of propoxyphene to two tablets of either aspirin or APC.

And the Lilly Co. itself says:

As for the view that Darvon should not be prescribed routinely in preference to other analgesics, we agree.

But it is obvious from the level it is being purchased that it has been prescribed routinely, anyway, it would seem to me to be so.

Dr. WELLS. We don't think so. We think the routine prescription is being discouraged about as actively as we can. So we don't feel that that will be a continuing problem.

Mr. STATLER. Medical Letter incidentally, is one of the sources of information that all of our therapeutic agency committees have at their disposal. Most of our hospitals have between 80 and 100 of the leading journals as reference sources in addition to the peer reviews of clinicians actually using the drug, so information in Medical Letter is considered. We have seen comments, for example, in the minutes of the therapeutic committees indicating that a specific drug was evaluated in the Medical Letter and they have discussed this and either agreed or did not agree or are looking into it further.

Senator NELSON. The Medical Letter also states that the oral tetracycline of choice is tetracycline hydrochloride capsules. They are as reliably absorbed and as clinically effective as any other oral tetracycline.

Dr. WELLS. We are quite aware of this as a problem and I would like to ask Dr. Robert Loudon, who is an expert in the field of antibiotics, to speak to the point. Dr. Loudon.

Senator NELSON. In other words, my question is, then, why should we be purchasing the other forms that are much more expensive if not more effective?

Dr. LOUDON. Senator Nelson, I think in the testimony before this committee Dr. Heinz Eichenwald who appeared earlier confirmed this belief that the tetracyclines as a group have similar indications and that they have varying costs, varying prices.

The question here, the specific question, about the reasons for these appearing on the formularies of Veterans' Administration hospitals, I think is of a similar order to the answers which have been made about the other instances of analgesics or Peritrate appearing on the formulary.

The tetracyclines which appear on the formulary offer a degree of flexibility to the individual physician who is prescribing these drugs for his patients. The relative usage of the different preparations is something which we will expect to change as a result of the testimony which has been produced here, the efforts which you have made in this direction, and the efforts which the VA is making to implement the findings.

Dr. WELLS. Mr. Chairman, may I add that I think it is important to note that during 1970 the Veterans' Administration bought just